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Forty-first Report

**COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS**

(This report covers the period from
28 November through 4 December 1973)

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Forty-First Report**COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF THE VIETNAM AND LAOS
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS AND RELATED DEVELOPMENTS***

(This report covers the week
from 28 November through 4 December 1973)

The Key Points

- No new regular infiltration groups were detected entering the pipeline in North Vietnam during the past week.
- Intercepted North Vietnamese messages and photography indicate that Hanoi has probably launched its annual dry season logistics push through southern Laos, apparently at a pace exceeding last year's initial effort.
- Communist military activity in South Vietnam was highlighted by heavy action in Quang Duc Province and an attack by fire against the country's largest petroleum storage complex.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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DETAILS

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

Personnel Infiltration and Redeployments

1. No new regular NVA combat groups were detected moving south in the infiltration system during the past week. Consequently, the number of regular groups which has been observed en route to South Vietnam since 11 November -- when a step-up in combat infiltration to the Central Highlands and southern South Vietnam was forecast by the North Vietnamese -- remains at two (see last week's report). Because travel times to South Vietnam have been reduced from the pre-cease-fire environment, however, Hanoi still has time to move large numbers of troops south for possible action during the current dry season.

2. Six small special-purpose infiltration groups, with a total of some 175 persons, were detected moving south during the past week. Four of these groups are destined for the northern half of South Vietnam, while the other two, which consist of high-ranking personnel, are en route to southern Laos. Only one of these groups was detected starting south in North Vietnam, the other five being identified farther south in the infiltration system.

3. Because only special-purpose groups were detected during the reporting period, last week's total of 28,000 North Vietnamese troops starting south since 1 September 1973 remains unchanged. This total is almost 9,000 less than during the comparable period in 1972. Moreover, about 80 percent of the troops who have infiltrated south since 1 September 1973 have been sent to southern Laos and to MR 559 units in western South Vietnam, while in 1972 almost the same proportion was destined for combat units in South Vietnam, as shown in the table below.

**Comparative Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination
1 September - 4 December**

	1972	1973
Total	36,500	28,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	10,500	2,000
MR 5	5,000	2,000
B-3 Front	4,000	500
COSVN	8,500	1,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	8,500	22,500

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Preface

This report is the forty-first in a series summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military materiel toward and into South Vietnam, (II) Communist-initiated combat activity in violation of the Vietnam and Laos settlement agreements, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.



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Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies

North Vietnam

4. A brisk pace of logistic activity continued in the North Vietnamese Panhandle last week. Binh Trams (BT) 8 and 26, major transshipment points in the Vinh and Dong Hoi areas, were detected handling large shipments of ammunition and explosives (see Map 562332). Between 29 November and 1 December, one transportation company in the Vinh area shipped 57 tons of ammunition and 64 tons of explosives. Farther south, elements of BT 26 reported that on 1 December alone, barges had been loaded with 143 tons of cargo.

5. The rate of southward supply shipments through southern North Vietnam probably will increase during December. According to a 1 December intercept from BT 8, the major ordnance depot is scheduled to send out 3,800 to 4,000 tons of arms and ammunition during the month. The December supply push in the Vinh area probably will result in an upsurge in the flow of supplies into southern Laos.

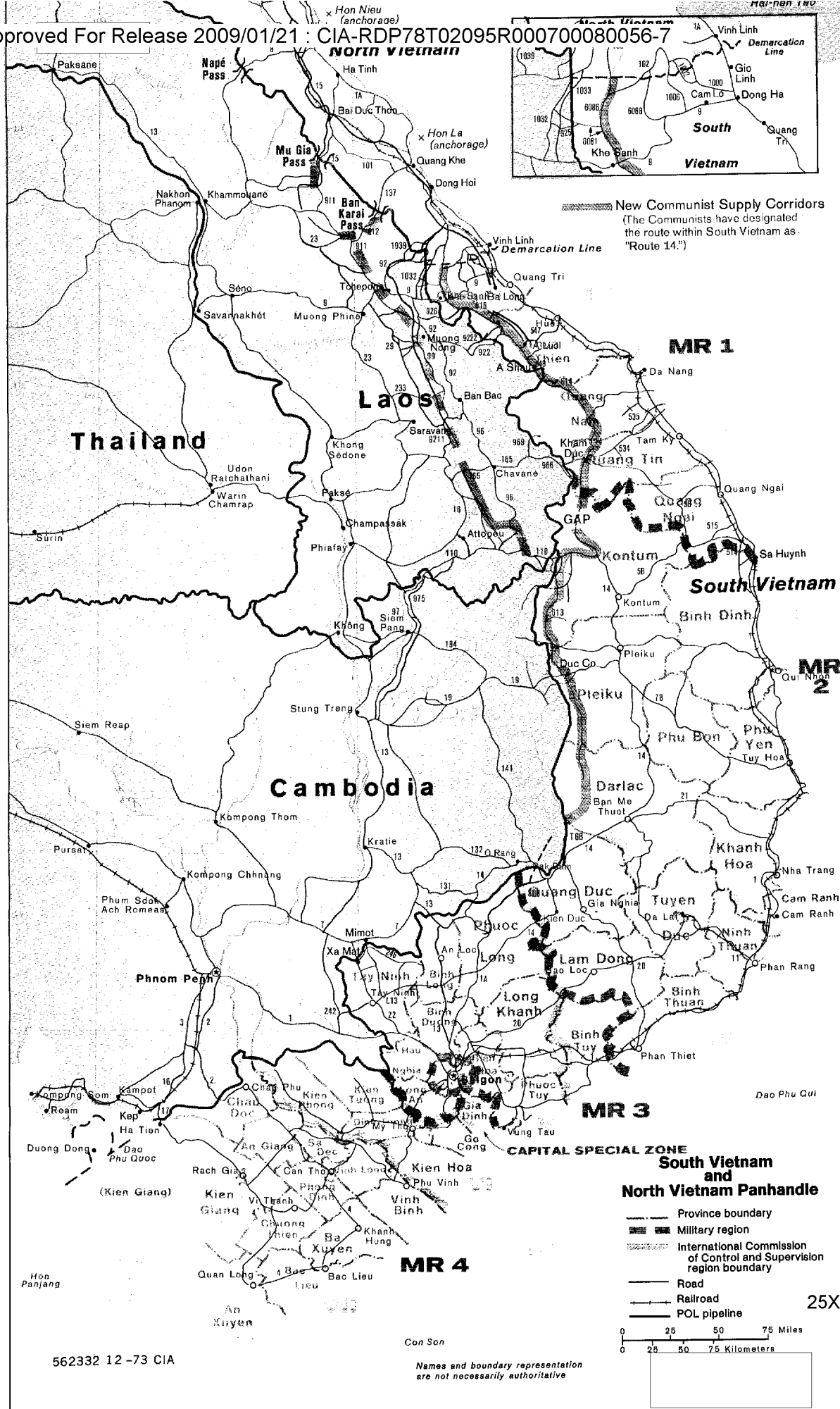
6. In addition to the supply movements, COMINT of early December indicates that tanks are currently moving in the North Vietnamese Panhandle, possibly along Route 1. At least three, and possibly as many as five, armor groups have been noted with a total strength of at least 25 tanks. Although neither the direction of movement nor specific location was revealed in the intercepts, the tanks possibly are headed south. During last year's regular infiltration cycle, Hanoi sent some 600 tanks to South Vietnam, most of which arrived after the January cease-fire.

Southern Laos

7. Heavy dry season truck traffic has apparently resumed along the recently upgraded Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos. Between [redacted] about 600 cargo trucks, some 90 carrying pontoon bridge sections, were observed in groups of 30 to 100 vehicles moving south along the central portions of the new dual-lane road system. In addition, another 240 trucks were observed parked along the same route during the period. Northbound traffic was exceptionally light on all days but 2 December, when about 200 empty trucks were observed heading north toward Muong Nong. In addition to cargo trucks, several possible artillery pieces were seen in tow with the convoys.

8. The actual number of trucks moving south or parked probably is considerably less than the 840 aggregated from photographic coverage [redacted] The repetitive coverage of this

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route system probably reflects the passage of large groups of vehicles that had entered the system undetected [REDACTED] A large number of the vehicles are probably associated with the movement of engineering and support equipment to secure and maintain the route structure during the coming months. Even so, the photography indicates that the North Vietnamese have probably launched their annual dry season logistical push through southern Laos, apparently at a pace exceeding last year's initial effort.

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9. To accommodate the increase in vehicular traffic into and through southern Laos, the North Vietnamese have shifted major rear service units southward within the Panhandle. On 26 November, the Headquarters, Group 472 - responsible for the movement of troops and supplies in southern Laos - completed an 85-kilometer move southward from its old base area near Muong Phine to a new position in the Ban Bac area where it will oversee dry season activity. Binh Tram 14, recently designated the 14th Engineer Regiment, has expanded its area of operations southward to the vicinity of Route 9 adjacent to Quang Tri Province, but remains responsible for supply shipments from North Vietnam through the Ban Karai Pass as well. At the same time, the 595th NVA Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment is deploying to new positions farther south in the Panhandle. Major elements of the regiment, with a secondary responsibility for engineering tasks, have already turned over their operational areas to the 14th Engineering Regiment and moved from Savannakhet to Saravane Province. In addition, the 35th Engineering Regiment is relocating, probably in a southerly direction.

South Vietnam

10. The level of logistic activity in northern South Vietnam last week was low. Heavy rains continue to impede traffic in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces. On 29 November, for example, Headquarters, Group 473 reported to MR 559 that sections of road in Thua Thien Province controlled by the 42nd Engineering Regiment were still impassable because of mud. Moreover, a large portion of Route 9 in western Quang Tri Province is closed to vehicular traffic as a result of weather, and some other routes, which were reported as open, could sustain only limited traffic.

II. Communist-Initiated Combat Activity in South Vietnam and Laos

South Vietnam

11. In South Vietnam the total number of Communist-initiated cease-fire violations reported by the South Vietnamese Armed Forces since 27 January, since 15 June, and for the last week (28 November - 4 December) are shown below:

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Military Region	Total Since 27 January Cease-Fire		Total Since 15 June Cease-Fire		Last Week (28 Nov - 4 Dec)	
	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor
Total	4,114	26,471	1,745	12,516	85 (82)¹	614(633)
MR 1	1,489	5,393	464	2,034	16	77
MR 2	674	4,425	410	2,571	20	122
MR 3	621	4,675	219	2,099	15	107
MR 4	1,330	11,978	652	5,812	34	308

1. Figures in parentheses denote totals of the previous week.

12. Some of these violations may have been initiated by South Vietnamese forces rather than Communist forces, and it is impossible in all cases to determine the actual instigator. The tabulation above and the charts following the Annex, however, show fairly accurately the trend in the amount of combat that has occurred in South Vietnam since the cease-fire. The fact that a combat incident occurred at a particular time and place is generally reported accurately by the South Vietnamese, even though the question of who started it may not always be treated objectively.

13. Significant combat activity occurred on 4 December when Communist forces, probably elements of the 205th and 271st NVA Infantry Regiments, attacked government positions south of Bu Prang and at Dak Song in what appears to be a well-coordinated operation. The command post of the 53rd ARVN Regiment at Kien Duc, 18 miles south of Bu Prang, was struck by a Communist force of unknown size supported by tanks and artillery. The ammunition dump at the camp was blown up, and North Vietnamese troops overran the town on the morning of 5 December. Although details are sketchy, [] when the attack began on the 4th, ARVN defenders repulsed three assaults before being forced to withdraw. The government survivors of the attack on Kien Duc reportedly have withdrawn eastward to Nhon Co, and approximately 1,000 civilian refugees were moved yesterday from Kien Duc to Gia Nghia, the provincial capital. The number of friendly and enemy casualties is not known at this time. In addition, elements of the 53rd Regiment, advancing north toward Bu Prang, reported heavy Communist infantry attacks supported by tanks. A fire-support base south of these elements was overrun, and two 105-mm howitzers were lost. More than 80 tactical air sorties have been flown in support of government troops, and the South Vietnamese report that six Communist tanks have been destroyed. The successful attack at Kien Duc cuts off ARVN forces north of the town from land resupply.

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[redacted]

Their position will become increasingly untenable should ARVN prove unable to retake the town quickly. Map 515529 shows the current distribution of Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces, by military region.

14. To the south, an enemy attack by fire occurred on 2 December at the Nha Be petroleum storage area six miles southeast of Saigon. The Shell storage complex was almost totally destroyed. Preliminary estimates of the number of barrels of petroleum destroyed range as high as one-half million, most of which was allocated to the civilian sector. Nha Be, which also includes an Esso and Caltex depot, is the main receiving point for petroleum imported into South Vietnam and is the transshipment point for petroleum sent to Phnom Penh via the Mekong River. This attack may portend further Communist efforts to reduce South Vietnam's petroleum reserves and to disrupt distribution at a time when US oil companies are being forced to reduce deliveries. While the loss is serious, the American Embassy in Saigon estimates that it will not affect the long-range viability of either ARVN military operations or the civilian economy. Rationing for the civilian sector, however, is certain.

Laos

15. There was no significant military activity in Laos last week.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Increased SA-7 Firings in South Vietnam

16. Since early November, an increase in VC/NVA firings of SA-7 missiles within South Vietnam has been noted. During the first three weeks of the month, more than a dozen such missiles were reported by the South Vietnamese to have been launched against South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) aircraft, the first such activity in South Vietnam since mid-August. Although SA-7s are widely distributed among VC/NVA units throughout South Vietnam, some 70% of the recent firings have been in the Bu Prang area of Quang Duc Province, the scene of heavy fighting and VNAF activity since early November. The remaining firings have been in Dinh Tuong Province in MR 4. Increased SA-7 firings can be expected whenever VNAF significantly increases its activity.

MIG-17s in North Vietnamese Panhandle

17. [redacted] Hanoi probably is reinstituting MIG training in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. [redacted]

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MIG-17s were to conduct training exercises in Nghe An Province. The activity also was to include air defense training associated with the destruction of reconnaissance and armed aircraft that may violate North Vietnamese airspace. On 30 November, Hanoi initially scheduled 16 MIG-17s based at Kep Airfield northeast of Hanoi to fly south to Bai Thuong Airfield near the Thanh Hoa/Nghe An Province border. Since then, 14 MIG-17s have been detected conducting flights to Bai Thuong, the first such deployment of MIG-17s south of the 20th parallel since mid-1972. Although five of these have returned to northern airfields, nine still remain and probably will participate in the training exercises in Nghe An Province.

ANNEX

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL
TO THE SOUTH

During the reporting period, six special-purpose infiltration groups were detected moving south -- 173, M338, M704, Y315, YDB870, and YDB873. The first four of these groups are destined for the northern half of South Vietnam, while the latter two are en route to southern Laos. The detection of these groups, however, does not appreciably increase our estimate of North Vietnamese infiltration starts. Since the 15 June reaffirmation of the Vietnamese cease-fire, almost 36,000 North Vietnamese have infiltrated southward, including nearly 34,000 combat troops and 2,000 specialists. Since the 27 January agreement, about 86,000 personnel have infiltrated southward, including about 78,000 combat troops and 8,000 specialists. Some 61,000 of these personnel have started south since 27 January, while 25,000 were in the pipeline moving southward as of that date. The following table shows the number of North Vietnamese infiltrators starting south, by month and destination, since 1 January 1973.

**Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia
Since 1 January 1973¹**

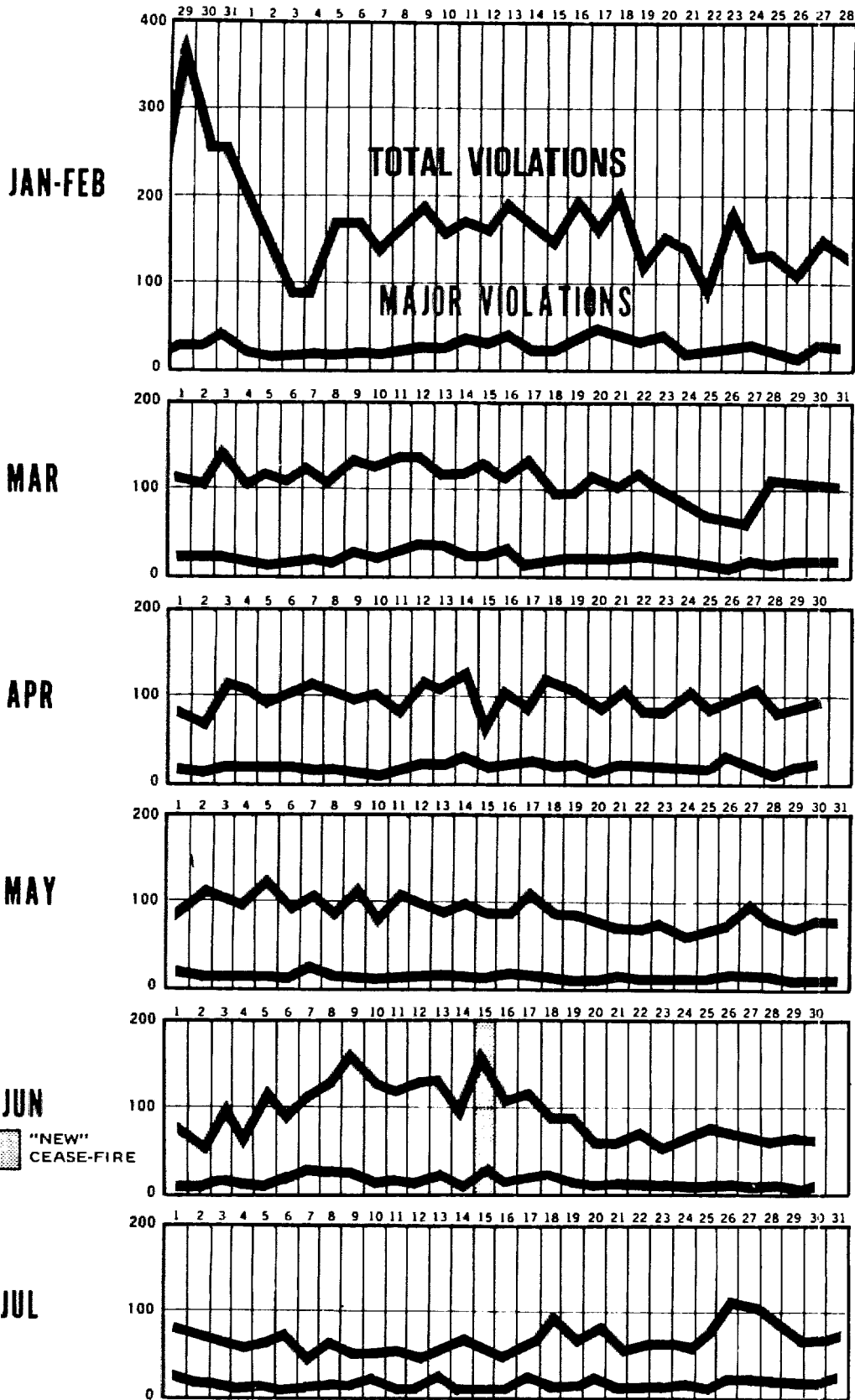
	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri-Thien-Hue	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
Total	14,000	6,000	9,000	14,000	26,500	69,500
Jan	7,000	5,000	4,000	2,500	....	18,500
Feb	5,000	500	....	1,500	1,000	8,000
Mar	....	....	....	1,000	....	1,000
Apr	1,000	....	....	....	....	1,000
May	....	....	....	7,000	....	7,000
Jun	....	....	....	....	1,500	1,500
Jul	....	....	3,000	....	....	3,000
Aug	....	....	....	....	1,500	1,500
Sep	....	....	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	....	....	....	....	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	500	....	....	5,500	7,000
Dec 1-4	....	....	....	....	....	....

1. Excludes special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.



CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

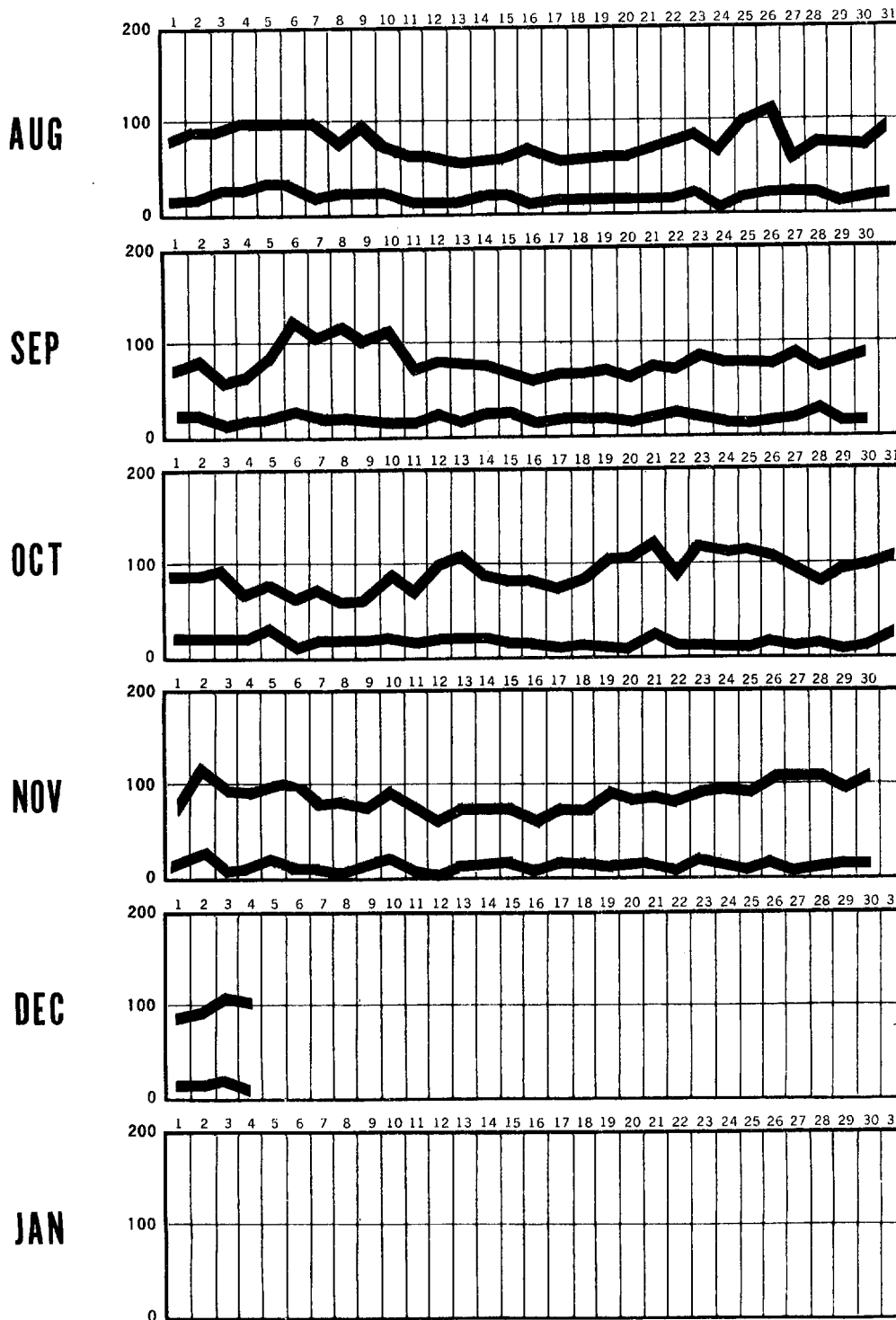
(28 JANUARY THROUGH 31 JULY 1973)





CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS REPORTED BY RVNAF

(1 AUGUST 1973 TO THE PRESENT)



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